MICHAEL R. BENEDETTO
Assemblyman 82nd District
Bronx, New York

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIRMAN
Committee on Education

COMMITTEES
Labor
Rules
Ways and Means

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

As you're aware, in addition to any other type of paid or unpaid time off that an employer may offer under its policies or to comply with legal requirements, New York State employers must continue to provide paid time off for COVID-related reasons, such as for employees who need to take leave because they are under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19. New York's separate COVID-19 sick leave has no expiration date, and as employers are slowly discovering, that means these obligations are long-lasting.

While we fully support paid leave for employees who are under a mandatory or precautionary order of quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19, it has come to our attention that this is causing an excessive financial burden for NY's school bus industry which is already suffering from a bus driver shortage. As you're aware, many school bus contractors did not get paid at all during the shutdown from March to June 2020:

Coronavirus News: One of largest school bus companies on Long Island goes out of business; **https://abc7ny.com/baumann-bus-company-drivers-long-island-ronkonkoma/6136218/**

'End of the Line': School Bus Industry in Crisis Because of the Coronavirus; ***https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/28/us/coronavirus-school-buses.html***

We have recently been informed by the New York School Bus Contractors Association (NYSBCA) that ever since Federal assistance ended in 2020, the industry has paid over $20,000,000 to employees to quarantine as school bus drivers/matrons/mechanics cannot work remotely due to the very nature of their job. This helped keep the workplace and students safe, but it was and continues to be a tremendous financial burden on the school bus industry and an expense for which they are not reimbursed.

Currently, NYSBCA estimates that they are spending over $2,000,000 per week on quarantine pay. We are asking for your support to allow private school bus contractors to submit an invoice (supported by actual payroll records) to the school districts that they serve for the

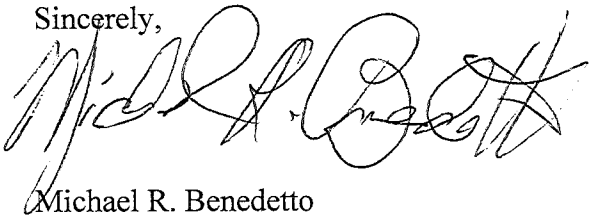
DISTRICT OFFICES:
3602 E. Tremont Ave., Suite 201, Bronx, New York 10465 • 718-892-2235, FAX: 718-892-0036
Room 12, 2nd Fl., Co-Op City Comm. Center #1, 177 Dreiser Loop, Bronx, New York 10475 • 718-320-2220, FAX: 718-320-4753
ALBANY OFFICE:
Room 836, Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York 12248 • 518-455-5296, FAX: 518-455-4641
Email: benedem@nyassembly.gov

quarantine expenses incurred. We also ask that the state reimburse school districts for this one-time crisis payment. These dollars went 100% into employees' wages, not for service, but for the

health and safety of our children. These expenses should be supported by the state as New York State provides no reimbursement or subsidy to employers for the paid sick leave benefits required under the law. This industry simply cannot withstand another unfunded mandate especially during the current bus driver shortage.

Together we are all looking forward to putting our business back on track and returning our school systems to normal. We need your help to make that happen.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Benedetto
Member of Assembly